

"I strive, & keep my head above water."

The arms of one of the provinces of Holland is a lion, swimming, with the above motto - a device which might ^{aptly} be ~~very~~ ^{very} suitably applied to the whole country. A large part of ~~Holland~~ ^{which} is a delta, formed of the mud deposited by the Rhine & the Scheldt, ~~in the same manner as~~ ^{the delta of Egypt has been formed by the Nile. Much of it is mud driven up by the sea, in return for what it carries from the parts of the coast.} A spoil, rescued from the waters by the continued efforts & ingenuity of man, was this human care removed, but for six months, without doubt the waves would again their ancient dominion; so much of the land lies below the level of the sea. ~~Fast wastes of sand & mud-banks, quite uninhabitable, such as now lie at the mouths of the Nile & Mississippi would~~ ^{now occupy nearly the whole of this most populous & busy state.}

Holland is, in many ways, the most wonderful country under the sun.
 Well,

houses are "built upon the sand" & do
stand: not only houses, but cities;—
Amsterdam & Rotterdam have no
other foundation. From ~~some of the~~
I other ~~underground~~ ^{lootings} stated for
the morass, with which piles are driven
through many feet of bog earth—millions
of solid beams, which, hidden under
ground, support the crowded buildings
of these large cities.

We speak contemptuously of anything held together by straws, yet a long line of coast of several provinces is consolidated by no other means than a few reeds intermixed with straw wisps or woven into mats. Without this frail but effectual support, the people dwelling on sand-hills, would be driven about into the interior, & would overthrow whole districts of cultivated land. In Holland the laws of nature seem to be reversed; the ^{the rivers are} sea is higher than the land; ~~the lowest part of the country is 24 or 30 feet below high water mark.~~ ^{2 in} In no other country do the keels of the ships float above the chimneys of the houses, & no where else does the frog croaking among the bulrushes, look down upon the swallow on the house-top.

Where rivers take their course, it is
not in beds of their own choosing; they
are

veneration. These birds are not only
 never injured or disturbed, but a
 cart-wheel or some other contrivance
 is often placed on the house-top for
 their use - partly that the bird may not
 build so in the chimney itself as
 to stop it up. Their large nests are
 to be seen on the edge of a gable or near
 a chimney on the roofs of farm
 houses & even in the town a good
 number for the dwellers therein when
 the stork builds on a roof, & to kill
 one of these birds would be thought
 little less than a crime. The storks
 usually migrate southwards in
 August & return in May - the old
 ones, to their former nests. During
 a great fire which raged, in 1536, in
 the town of Delft, the storks were seen
 bearing away their young ones from
 their nest through the midst of the
 flames, & where they could not effect
 this, perishing with the ^{glorious} young. They
 could not save. Every species of
 birds religiously protected from injury
 & bird-nesting is prohibited by law;
 for the birds eat the insects which
 would destroy the grasses which bind
 the sea defences.

Immense

Peter slept when he worked as a shipwright at Saardam. The armour of Admiral Tromp, with its bullet marks; the grey leather doublet, sprinkled with blood, which William ~~Prince~~ of Orange wore in the day when he was murdered at Delft. The picture gallery is ~~the~~ most interesting collection; it is confined almost entirely to the works of the Dutch masters - Paul Potter's Young Bull, which has been valued at £5,000, & Rembrandt's Cow drinking, & Gerard Jor's Woman with her baby in a cradle, & many other famous pictures. But the least curious thing about Holland is that a great School of painting should have been developed in a land which contains so little to please the imagination: but the Dutch pictures are hardly works of imagination; they are usually small pictures of quite homely subjects - a market woman with a hare in her hand, a man blowing a vumpet, or a boy blowing bubbles, or a view of the inside or outside of a church, an old woman peeling potatoes: - ~~These pictures are delightful, only because they are such true imitations of life & nature as she appears in homely Holland; beautifully drawn, wonderfully coloured, they please the eye, though they are without the poetic feeling which~~ should

John Van der Does, the beerformaster - chief magistrate - was Pieter Van der Werf; hero, & patriot, both, worthy to rule this city of brave men. When Van der Does was urged by Valdez to surrender, he replied for himself & his townsmen, "When provisions fail us we will devour our left hands, reserving our right to defend our liberty." For nearly four months the inhabitants had held out without murmuring, even women & children taking a share in the defence. For seven weeks bread had not been seen within the walls; horses, cats, ^{rats} & dogs, roots and leaves, were eagerly devoured. Their priests outside in vain tried to bring in provisions to the besieged, so strictly was the blockade maintained. Pestilence came in the train of famine, & carried off the people so fast, that the starving beings who were spared were scarcely able to bury their dead.

At length two carrier pigeons flew into the town - gentle messengers bearing good news. The Prince of Orange had determined to cut the dykes of the Maas & Geesel to relieve the heroic town. As this fearful alternative could not be resorted to without involving in total ruin the whole province of Holland, it is no wonder it was only adopted after much hesitation & as a last resource. The dykes once cut the country would be flooded, the Spanish army,

Army submerged, & boats laden with provisions, ^{men} would be able to reach the walls of the famished city. The dykes, were cut, the country between founda, Port, Rotterdam & Leyden was submerged, but, alas, only to the depth of a few feet; the 200 boats, sent by the Prince of Orange for their relief, were in sight of the inhabitants, but could get no nearer; the water was not deep enough. The wind was unfavourable; so long as the easterly breeze prevailed, they ^{knew} felt, as they anxiously ~~stood~~ ^{saw} from towers & house-tops that they must look in vain for the welcome ocean.

Yet, while thus patiently waiting, they were literally starving; for even the fugitives, andured at Haaslem had not reached that depth & intensity of agony to which Leyden was now reduced. Women & children, all day long, were seen searching gutters & dung-hills for morsels of food. ~~They~~ ~~disputed~~ ~~fiercely~~ with the infants starved to death on their mothers' breasts; mothers dropped dead in the streets with their dead children in their arms.

In many a house the wretched, in their rounds, found a whole family of corpses - father, mother, children - side by side. Pestilence stalked at noon-day through the city, & the doomed inhabitants fell like grass before his scythe. From six thousand to eight thousand human beings fell ~~sank~~ ^{were} before this scourge alone; yet

the people resolutely held out; women & men
mutually encouraging each other to resist
the entrance of their foreign foe - an evil
more horrible than pest or famine.
Leyden was sublime in its despair. A
few murmurs were, however, occasionally
heard at the steadfastness of the
magistrate; & a dead body was placed
at the door of the burghmaster as a silent
witness against his inflexibility. A
party of the more faint-hearted even,
assailed the heroic Pieter Van der Werf
with threats & reproaches as he passed along
the streets. A crowd had gathered around
him by the Church of St. Pancras: there
stood the burghmaster, a tall, haggard, imposing
figure, with dark visage & a tranquil but
commanding eye. He waved his broad hand
telling for silence, & then exclaimed,
"What would ye my friends? Why do ye
murmur that we do not break our vows
& surrender the city to the Spaniards? -
a fate more horrible than the agony which
she now endures. I tell you I have made
an oath to hold the city; & may God give
me strength to keep my oath. Your
menaces move me not. My life is at
your disposal. Here is my sword; plunge
it into my breast, & divide my flesh
among you. Take my body to appease your
hunger but expect no surrender so long as

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"I remain alive."

The crowd fell back in silence: ~~but~~ happily their misery was now nearly at an end. The wind changed to the south-west driving the tide up the river - a violent equinoctial gale, which presently shifted & blew with still more violence from the south-west. The waters of the North Sea were piled in vast masses upon the southern coast of Holland, & then dashed furiously landward, the ocean rising over the earth & sweeping with unrestrained power across the ruined dykes. The inundation spread to the walls of Leyden with such suddenness that the Spanish ramparts were surrounded, & more than ~~the~~ a thousand of their soldiers were overwhelmed in the flood. The same tide which swept them away, carried the flotilla of boats, laden with provisions, to the gates of Leyden. Before the inhabitants were relieved, one more ^{anxious} night, a pitch-dark night followed; there were moving lights, & strange sounds, & a terrible crash as of falling walls. The horror struck citizens fought the Spaniards ^{indeed} were upon them at last. Day dawned at length. Within the fortresses reigned a death-like stillness, which inspired a sickening suspicion. Had the city indeed been carried ⁱⁿ